

## *Speak, Ask Questions, Listen: Accessibility and Language in Advising*

**Dr. Kathryn Fore**

Sr. Academic Advisor/ Honors College Coordinator  
Academic Support Center  
University at Albany  
kfore@albany.edu

**Marcelle Martens**

Sr. Academic Advisor/ First Year Transition and Persistence Coordinator  
Academic Support Center  
University at Albany  
mlmartens@albany.edu

---

### **Overview**

Developmental and Appreciative advising models stress the importance of deepening relationships through creative questioning and exploration of student goals. However, often our explorations are couched in institutional language which, for non-traditional student populations like First Gen students, can be intimidating or isolating. This presentation will draw on curricular design, counseling techniques, and even improv comedy to explore examples of accessible, open communication techniques that can create inviting questions and conversations. More intentional language can help put students at ease, invite them into the world of academics, and empower them to take greater agency in their own academic journeys. This can especially help level the playing field for students who might otherwise feel unwelcome at college, making accessible language a crucial tool for student success.

### **What You'll Learn**

- Develop strategies for implementing soft language, strategic questioning, and active listening in our interactions with advisees
- Implement theory from appreciative advising and cultural navigation to our day to day work
- Advising approaches and strategies, creating and maintaining inclusive environments, inclusive and respectful communication, creating rapport and relationships

### **Agenda**

Advisors and “Professionalism”

- When professionalism is not helpful
-

- Per my last email ism...
- What's the problem with professionalism?
  - Who are we harming?
- Goal of Professionalism?

Navigation is Key

- “Cultural Navigators” – Terrell Strayhorn
  - ACCESS
  - AGENCY

Reframing our Language by using the fields of:

- Instructional Design
  - Accessible tone
    - Warm over Cold language
    - Invitation over command
      - What does this look like in practice?
    - How can we utilize advising tools to do this?
- Improv Theory
  - Accessible questioning
    - “yes, and” (Leonard, Kelly and Yorton, Tom (2015)
    - Collaboration!
- Mental Health Counseling
  - Accessible listening
    - Rogerian Therapy
      - Mirroring language
      - Check for understanding
      - Check for non-verbal cues
      - Student autonomy

In conclusion, we need to address the way we: Speak, Ask questions, and Listen

## References

- Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 (2015). *Accessible Syllabus*. <https://www.accessiblesyllabus.com>
- Leonard, Kelly and Yorton, Tom. (2015). *Yes, And: How Improvisation Reverses “No, But” Thinking and Improves Creativity and Collaboration- Lessons from the Second City*. Harber Business.
- PositivePsychology.com (2024). *10 Person-Centered Therapy Techniques & Interventions [+PDF]*. Therapy Exercises. <https://positivepsychology.com/client-centered-therapy/>
- Strayhorn, Terrell L. (2015). Reframing Academic Advising for Student Success: From Advisor to Cultural Navigator. *NACADA Journal*, 35(1), 56-63.
- Tyler, Forrest B. (2001). Elitism, Racism, and Professionalism. *Cultures Communities Competence and Change* (pp. 291-319). Springer Press.